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TAGS: [NATO](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [QA](#)  
SUBJECT: RFG: NATO-QATAR COOPERATION AGREEMENT

REF: 2007 STATE 162364

Classified By: Ambassador Victoria Nuland. Reasons: 1.4 (b, d).

11. (SBU) This is a request for guidance. See para 8.

12. (S/NF) NATO has been unable to conclude a Cooperation Agreement with Qatar, largely due to significant differences over the issue of jurisdiction: the Qataris continue to insist on sole jurisdiction over NATO personnel; the U.S. and other key Allies need to preserve the rights we have bilaterally with the Qataris and therefore will not be able to accept even the NATO IS compromise of concurrent jurisdiction. Given this apparent impasse, USNATO proposes that Doha be asked to allow the NATO Cell to continue operating staffed only with personnel from countries with existing bilateral agreements with Qatar, while flying a NATO flag.

13. (S/NF) SUMMARY CONTINUED: As background, the proposed agreement would provide the legal framework for establishing an official status for the NATO personnel located at the Combined Air Operations Center working in support of the Alliance's Afghanistan operation. Without this agreement, many Allies--and SACEUR--fear that the NATO Cell may be asked to leave Qatar. So a solution needs to be found. END SUMMARY

#### Background

14. (S/NF) Per reftel instructions, USNATO has ensured that the NATO International Staff has protected U.S. red lines, particularly regarding jurisdiction, in the ongoing negotiations with Doha for a NATO-Qatar Cooperation Agreement. This proposed agreement would provide the legal framework to establish official status for the NATO personnel stationed at the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) Cell at the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) at Al-Udeid Airbase, Qatar. Before the latest round of negotiations, held on April 28-29 in Qatar, NATO had received indications through several channels that Qatar was becoming frustrated with the process and might seek to end the negotiations without significant movement from the NATO side.

A number of Allies had expressed concern that such a result might lead the Qataris to request the closure of the ISAF Cell at the CAOC. At the May 5 meeting of NATO's Political Committee, however, the International Staff reported that the Qataris had not closed the door to future negotiations--although significant differences remain. The Qataris requested that NATO provide them with a complete text of the agreement as proposed by NATO; the International Staff is preparing this text. (Note: The U.S. asked that this text be distributed to Allies before being given to the Qataris.)

¶5. (C) On April 25, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), GEN Craddock, sent a letter (e-mailed to EUR/RPM) to NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer reiterating the importance that he places "on the role played by the ISAF personnel at the CAOC" in NATO's ongoing operation in Afghanistan. Noting intense inter theater competition for the scarce assets in CENTCOM's multiple theaters, SACEUR's letter stated that the ISAF Cell acts "as the CAOC's ISAF 'conscience'" and "ensures that ISAF troops and commanders are provided with the best possible air support from the available assets." GEN Craddock wrote that in order to continue playing this role, the ISAF Cell needs to continue to be physically located at the CAOC. As a result, he urged a re-examination of what we require from Qatar in order to conclude an agreement -- "separating the 'must haves' from the 'nice to haves.'"

¶6. (C) The Private Office has added a discussion of this item to the North Atlantic Council's May 7 meeting.

#### Recommendation

¶7. (S/NF) Assuming that neither side is able to move significantly from their respective red lines, reaching a multilateral agreement may not be possible -- although negotiations could continue to stretch out for some time to come. The possibility that Doha could eventually move to close down the ISAF Cell in the absence of such an agreement remains a worry of many Allies. Those concerns will likely grow in reaction to SACEUR's letter stressing the importance of the ISAF Cell at the CAOC. Should NATO-Qatar talks arrive at an impasse, a possible way ahead would be to determine whether the Qataris would allow the ISAF Cell to continue to operate without a NATO-Qatar agreement if it were staffed only with NATO personnel from countries with existing bilateral agreements with Qatar, such as the U.S., UK, and France. The bilateral agreements would thus be the vehicle for providing the necessary legal protections to the NATO personnel at the CAOC. This option would probably require the U.S. to contribute an additional six or seven individuals to the 14-person cell.

#### Request for Guidance

¶8. (S/NF) Unless otherwise directed, Ambassador will propose the way forward outlined in para 7 at the May 7 North Atlantic Council meeting.  
NULAND